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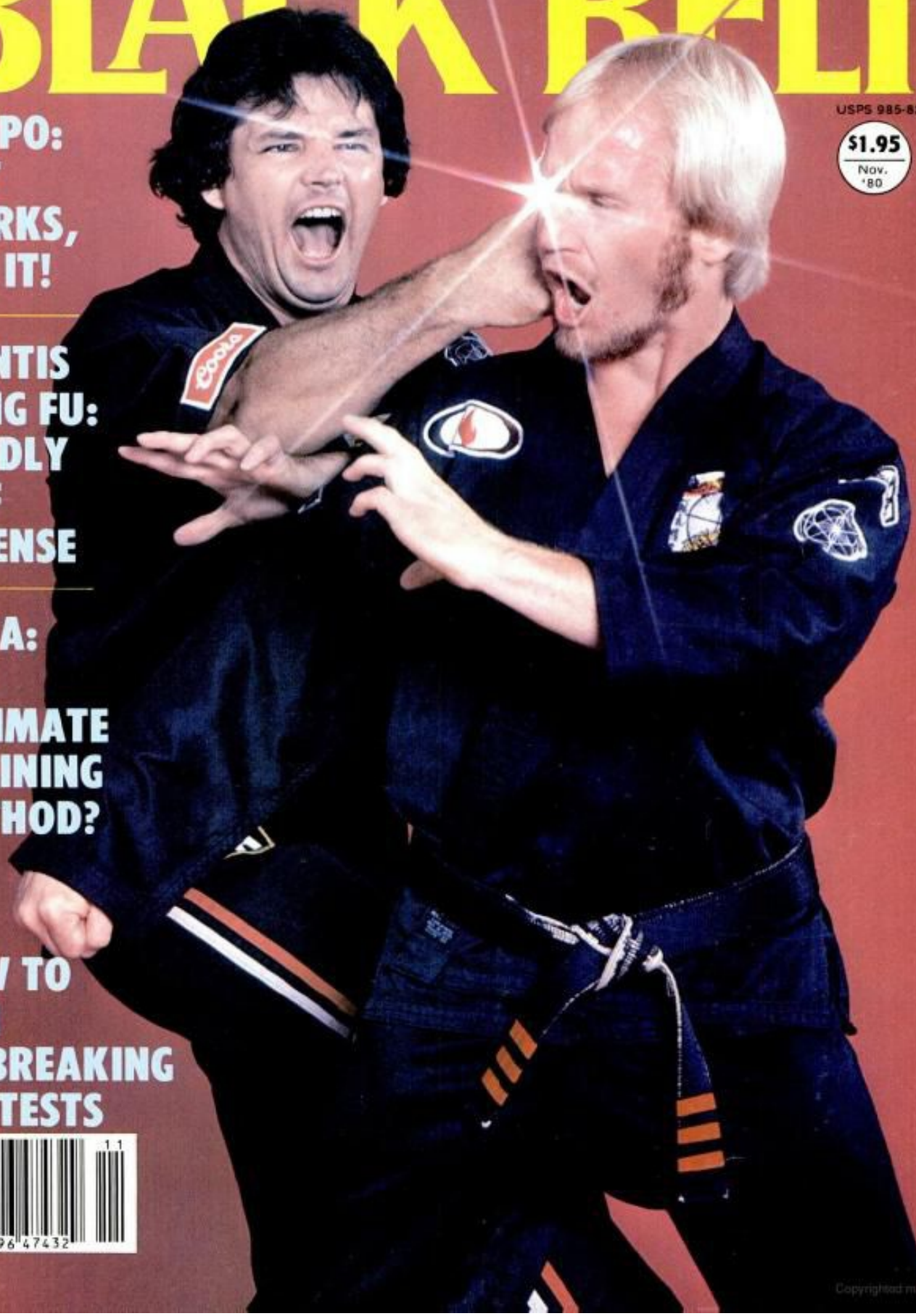

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KUMITE: A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

by John Stewart

Once in a lifetime . . .

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From time to time, BLACK BELT learns of unusual events or occurences in the martial arts; events that—either because of their nature or because they occurred in the distant past—cannot be easily verified. Because we do not want our readers to be misinformed, BLACK BELT has a policy of strict verification of all facts pertaining to any article. In this case, several members of the staff have invested considerable amounts of time and energy checking the details of the following article, which was the product of a series of four interviews conducted over a period of three months. Although there is no convenient way to verify each and every detail connected with this story, the editors have verified enough of the basic facts to feel confident in publishing it. But since we are not at liberty to share the corroborating evidence with the public, we acknowledge that each reader may have a different idea of what the facts permit him to believe.

For years the rumors have circulated. Those with an ear to the ground have heard fantastic tales of an invisible organization, an organization that sponsors an international, no-holds-barred tournament pitting dedicated martial artists of all arts against each other in bare-knuckle kumite.

According to the whispers, this kumite takes place at a secret location once every five years. Teams from dozens of countries are alleged to be transported to a secluded location to complete against other martial artists of all styles, providing feedback on new techniques and putting traditional favorites to a very real test. And for a variety of reasons, including legal reasons, the organizers are said to extract a written promise of silence from each participant. Regardless of the outcome, the competitors are not permitted to talk about what they saw and experienced. And none of them do.

Fantastic exaggerations? Perhaps. Totally impossible? Not at all.

Because one member of the organization has received permission to talk publically about such an event, the martial arts world may gain an insight into the reality that has fueled these continuing rumors. And although it may come as a shock to some that these rumors have a basis in fact, the actual truth is not so startling as it would seem at first.

The truth is that a full-contact kumite event is indeed held at a private location once every five years. The event is sponsored by the International Fighting Arts Association (I.F.A.A.) which, although not a publicity-seeking organization, is far from secret.

An international organization that has many members in the Orient, the I.F.A.A. provides a variety of conventional services to its members. But among those who know, the group's kumite event is considered to be a kind of martial arts Olympics, and to qualify to participate is no easy task.

The man who has been given the green light to break silence on this subject is Frank Dux, 24, a six-foot, two-inch heavyweight martial artist who compiled a distinguished military record during the Vietnam conflict. To say that Dux is an unusual person would be an understatement bordering on the absurd. And his motivation for wanting the story to become public is understandable, as we shall see later.

To Dux, participation in the I.F.A.A. kumite event was little more than the natural culmination of years of martial arts training. Although the details of his story are impossible to check out completely, BLACK BELT has spoken with other I.F.A.A. members from the United States and abroad who have privately confirmed that the basic facts are indeed as Dux says they are.

According to Dux, the event runs three days and losing competitors are expected to leave at the end of each day.

"You have three matches going at once," Dux explained, "and then, in the finals, you have only one. You fight 20 matches each day—ten in the morning and ten in the afternoon. And you use the whole evening to rest, maybe see the doctor, and get your strategy planned with your team."

The rules are brief and simple.

"There's no point system; you fight to a knockout or until one guy says 'Maitta' (I submit). The matches don't really go that long; the average match would last about 18 to 30 seconds. And it's very decisive, very easy to see the winner," he said.

According to Dux, there are none of the artificial rules that make other forms of martial arts competition a compromise activity. There are no kick requirements, for example, and although there is a judge, he is there only to call a knockout or to step in when it becomes plain that one competitor has won. "The judge makes sure there is no gouging or biting, and steps in if one guy starts to go a little bit too far. But that's all he does," Dux explained.

Dux described the facilities at the event he attended as "Just like a regular cabin at a camp. You might have a couple of heavy bags to warm up with, and each team goes off and they have their own little section. You warm up there and come out all psyched up."

Although Dux did not go into detail, he made the point that these martial artists are "treated like kings" and that,

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once they qualify, all their needs are seen to as a matter of routine.

Dux has no first-hand information about previous events, but he was able to describe the conditions of the matches that were held the year he attended, 1975.

"You fight on a platform about 12 x 12 feet, and about four feet high. The first day, you fight there. Then, the next day, you go to another platform, about 12 x 4 feet, which we called "the runway." The final day, we fought on kind of a rooftop, which was sort of a traditional setting. They had it shingled with red ceramic tiles, and that's where balance came in—if you're not used to it, you slid all over the place," he said casually with a very small smile on his face.

Each setting becomes more difficult as the competition progresses, and naturally, each setting requires a different set of tactics. "The reason they have the ring (the 12 x 12 platform) is to allow circular movement—most people are able to fight in a circular fashion. Then, on the runway, you have to be able to fight in a linear fashion. In the ring, you can utilize more body movement and slip, whereas if you are on the runway, all you've got is linear. If you are a linear fighter, this is where you can really shine—that is where the spinning kicks pay off," Dux said.

On the rooftop, the appropriate tactics and techniques change once again. "I used a lot of grappling techniques and worked my hands because I wanted to leave my feet in one position. I tried kicking once and almost fell off," Dux added.

Dux found himself entered in I.F.A.A. competition because his instructor, a Japanese man named Tanaka, had participated in past events. The organization holds smaller kumite matches on a continuing basis, and Dux had done well enough to warrant an invitation to the international event.

"It was very scary," Dux said when asked about his impressions when he arrived at the scene of the event, which was held in Nassau in November of 1975. "I didn't know what to think—I wasn't sure whether the thing was real or not. At first, it was just inconceivable to me," he admitted.

The format of the competition changes each time it is held, as does the location. But some elements remain the same, year after year.

"Each country is allowed a maximum of six entries—six of what they call their best, two in each weight class. That is, lightweight, middleweight and heavyweight. I fought heavyweight at that time. All arts are welcome," Dux continued, "including boxing and wrestling." Each fighter is given an identical groin cup and mouthguard, according to Dux, "and that's it. There are no gloves, because if you are hitting wrong, that should show something right there. If you hit wrong (without a glove), you jam up your fingers; with a glove, you can get away with it," he elaborated.

"Also, they provide a specially built cup that's made out of metal and that covers the hip joint. The cup is made in such a way that it will prevent damage, but will not stop shock transferance. So everyone gets identical equipment. No gloves are allowed, but you can wrap your hands and legs—although very few people wrap the legs, because they want the flex in there. The only optional thing is you can wear a gi top. Most of the guys who didn't wear the gi top were the sumo wrestlers, who didn't think it would be fair to them. A lot of guys wore it because it was traditional for them to be in a full gi. I didn't wear it because I didn't want to be hindered grabbing and I felt that I would be quicker without it," Dux said.

According to Dux, even though there are few formal rules, there is an unspoken code of rules that were always kept in mind. "There are unwritten rules, like you never intentionally

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hit the throat," Dux said. "If you're totally without control, it makes a lot of enemies, and you could really stand to get hurt," Dux said. "One guy was constantly hitting to the throat," Dux relates, "and it wasn't exactly an accident. So finally, everyone was out to get him and he had to fight a lot of hard matches."

The conditions of the matches change with each event so that the participants will not be able to anticipate the circumstances and gain any advantage.

"One year," Dux said of the previous matches he had heard about, "they had a circle and you had to stay inside a circle. Another time it was not on a rooftop, but on a cone-shaped platform. One year, they did it in mud—they just had a big pit full of mud and you fought in that mud. This is what makes it unique, because you don't know how to prepare for it. You have to be knowledgeable all around."

There may be those readers who would ask why anyone should want to fight under the difficult circumstances that the event demands. The answer is, in part, that there is much for a serious martial artist to learn, if he is willing to put himself in such a challenging position. There is a situation that reveals weaknesses in technique, conditioning and mental attitude quite promptly and without leaving any doubt. And, although fighting to a knockout is an unpleasant way to discover the deficiencies of your technique, it is a far safer and more controlled situation than actual life-or-death combat—either on the street or in military situations—would be. And that is a strong motivation, according to Dux.

"The event is aimed at the person who is a technician, maybe someone who has accumulated a different type of arsenal or technique that would be orthodox. Maybe he is doing something bold and he wants to reflect on a different type of strategy; maybe a different type of hand technique he wants to try out. Now, if he is fighting with somebody whose ability is below his, he will never truly know if his technique works or not. But this gives him the opportunity to try to work the technique against someone from another art and someone he has no knowledge of," Dux explained. "It's a learning experience," he added.

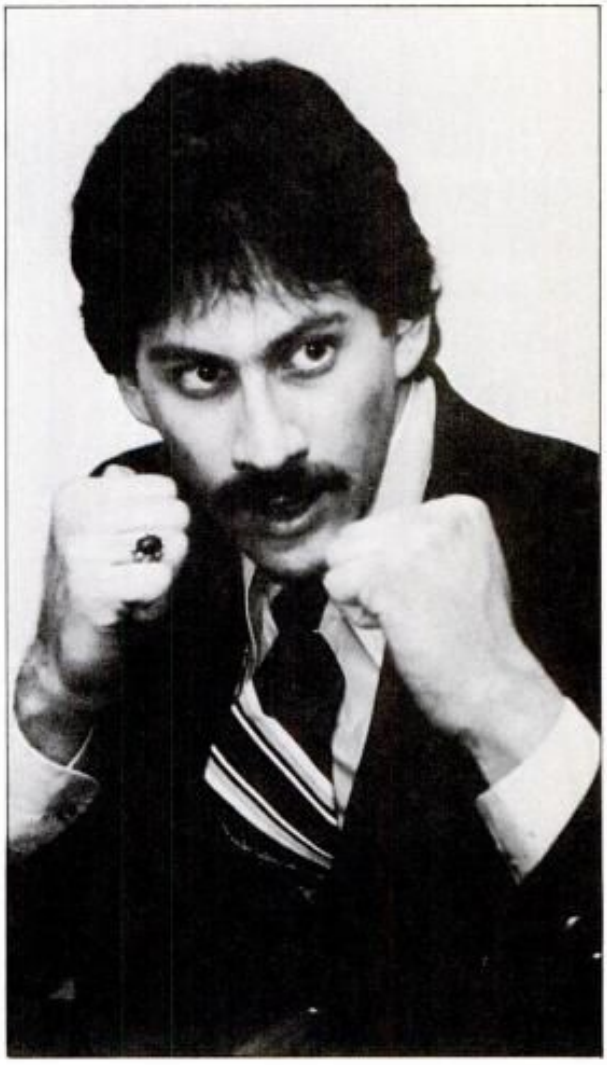
Why the secrecy? "To save face," Dux said. "Because it's in private. Let's say a competitor does a poor job—he doesn't want it reflecting on his art. And also, if you have studied all these years and come up with good techniques, you don't want the whole world knowing them. When you fight, you exchange techniques, and it's sort of even-steven (between the competitors). But if you have a bunch of spectators, they can see these techniques and never risk anything; meanwhile, you're sort of opening yourself up," he explained. "Also, it works as protection. By not publicizing yourself, you don't have to worry about someone always challenging you.

"So you get together, and it's sort of a meeting of minds among equals. The people who are involved get a chance to really analyze technique. Not theoretical garbage on a black board—you really get to find out what works." Dux admits that this kind of experience is not for every martial artist. "I think it takes an unusual type of person and an extremely dedicated type of person," he said.

To anyone who has fought full-contact bouts, 60 matches over three days sounds impossibly demanding, even if the matches are only a few seconds long.

Obviously, in the I.F.F.A. event, it would be important for each competitor to pace himself properly, saving enough stamina and energy for the next round.

"You don't throw head shots all the time," Dux explained. "Otherwise, your hands get numb and you can't use them. You've got to learn to work the body, which is softer. If you



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start hitting the head all the time, watch out for what happens to your knuckles—I don't care how much you toughen them. The other thing is that most matches are over within less than 30 seconds. Kumite matches are very quick," he said.

According to Dux, the competitors begin each match in very close proximity to each other, which he described as "most nerve-wracking."

There is a card flip at the start that determines which foot is forward, either left or right. If the card came up black, then the fighters would assume a right forward stance with their knees touching and the back of their right hands touching. The other hand is held at the side, and then, "hajime" is spoken.

"A lot of guys would try to get out (of the starting position) quick, without getting kicked. Others would try to hand trap and pop the other guy, or go for the hooks. Then again, a lot of guys just do a little twist and try to break the knee, which is one of my favorite techniques," Dux said.

How does one find himself in such an event? It doesn't happen by accident.

"In order to fight kumite, first of all, your instructor must be a member of the I.F.A.A. They don't take people from outside," he said firmly. "You are picked. Basically, they go through a competitive exam for a ranking. They send a tester down to test you over the years as you progress from green belt, or whatever, to black. These days the test is videotaped and filed. Along with the videotape, you have the tester who gives the score, which is also based on a difficulty factor. Based on that, they determine whether or not you are worthy to go to kumite. Once you are a senior student and make black belt, then you go into a special program in which you are introduced to the special rules of kumite, which are very few. They tell you what you are expected to do, and the legal ramifications, which are very important. So they give you a true understanding of what you are about to be involved in, and you walk in there knowing that this is not a brawl but a very serious event. The fact that you are asked to participate in kumite is winning in itself," Dux said. "Just to be asked is an honor."

As mentioned, all arts are represented. Although Dux was reluctant to categorize the true effectiveness of the competitors accord to their art, he did consent to making some general observations.

"The traditional judo guys went out quick, because it wasn't too fair—they would be getting in on a flip and all of a sudden, they could feel their hair being torn out. Their training didn't provide a counter for that. You've got to understand that judo is a sport more than a fighting method, like jujitsu."

Boxers, on the other hand, fared better. "We had a couple of boxers come in the event. They were pretty tough, but around the second day, they were lost because they couldn't move that much. A good knee attack started to take them out," Dux said.

Dux relates a story in which the Taiwanese team would come out for their matches psyched, and to prove it, they would smash a stack of boards before the start of each match. "They were pretty scary at first, because they had all this energy. But to break their energy; and this shows the sportiveness of the event; after the first day we took a log and tied it to the front door of their cabin and told them to chop that in half if they wanted to get out, which was really all in fun. They climbed out the window," Dux said, and added, "It's not like you're out there to kill. Some guys do get very psyched up, because it is demanding on the mind, but they are usually the first to go," he said.

"The sumo wrestlers," according to Dux, "were probably

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the most devastating of the bunch. In fact, the way they eliminated one of them was when one guy tripped, the sumo got up and as he got up, the first guy ran at his knees and hit him like a football tackle and took him off the platform." (To be thrown off the platform is to lose the match.) "But one sumo made it all the way to the roof. And when he finally went down, he just slid down and it looked like a big beach ball rolling downhill," Dux said, with a grin.

The key to winning, according to Dux, was to be cross-trained in a number of arts. "There would be men out there who were exceptional; with guts, determination, co-ordination, ability, and some a lot more than me. But extreme traditionalists—I don't want to mention any arts in particular—did not survive. Maybe half the people who were invited fell into the catagory of staunch traditionalists, and the others were into making themselves more well rounded. By the second day, there was not one strict traditionalist left," he said.

The other key to winning, Dux said, was experience at actual combat. "The people who lasted the longest tended to be people with military experience. The ones who had a high tolerance of pain and who could go beyond the bounds of conventional aggression."

Dux is able to tell of his experience only because he has received permission to act as a spokesman for the I.F.A.A., and because five full years have elapsed since the event took place. The reason the organization is willing to allow the information to become public is, in part, because they are looking for more members among American martial artists. They have realized that there are some exceptional American fighters now that American martial artists have developed so much.

And the reason they are now aware of that is Frank Dux. Dux won the heavyweight class, and because he was the first American to do so, he shocked some of the other participants and the organizers.

Why were the organizers surprised with Frank Dux? "Because of my overall record," he explained. "I'm not trying to sound like a braggard," he added, "but out of 329 fights I have lost only one and had only seven draws. Also, I hold several world records for my association—the fastest knockout (3.2 seconds); the most consecutive knockouts (56); the fastest recorded hook kick (72 MPH) and the fastest recorded knockout punch (.12 seconds). At that point it became obvious that Americans can fight," he said.

Dux explained that the event is recorded by high-speed filming video cameras, and that these provide a way to measure what actually happened in an event where the action is often blindingly fast. "When I got into the event, it was rather spooky because they cover just about every angle you can think of. They had about 16 cameras, regular video cameras and high-speed film cameras. They were researching, seeing whose kick went faster and if they could figure out mathmatically whose kicks were harder.

"They took the measurement with high speed film and broke it down, frame by frame. That is probably more accurate than a radar gun—a gun will sometimes lag and I have a feeling that a lot of martial artists are being cheated as far as measuring their speed goes, because it's not being done on high speed film."

Dux won a trophy for his performance in the event. The trophy is, Dux said, "basically a silver urn that is about 18 inches in diameter. It's on a pedestal about two feet high and it has hand-engraved porcelain all around," he said. "But the idea is not just to compete for a trophy—it's a great honor just

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KUMITE

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to compete. For one time in your life you can say 'I saw the best come together.' " He also added that the trophy is never really the property of the winner, and that its value makes it worth keeping in a secure place.

Because some of the competitors recognized Dux as an instructor for the Korean White Horse Corps, he was dubbed "The Flying Horse" after he was observed making leaping attacks. "I used to fly into action," Dux smiled, adding that his aggressive performance helped make the I.F.A.A. more willing to allow him to lead a crusade to attract more American participants.

"I wanted to let people know that the event is around, and that it exists. So when the I.F.A.A. does ask them to think about trying out for it, that they will be serious. I want more Americans to consider it, because it is very real," he said.

"I believe it is a true test of martial arts ability," he continued. "Because you are fighting under different conditions—a martial artist has got to learn to fight in a small, confined space or a big space. It makes it more of a true test, a test of grace, fluidity and power. There are injuries that occur, but at the same time, I think the event is humane.

"It isn't a fight, realistically—psychologically it is more demanding than physically, because you have never seen the fighters before. Also, kumite is not a sport, it is a competition. And there is a big difference between the two. This is a test, a test of one man, a martial artist and his style, versus another man and his style—and what it has done for him."

This event has been known strictly by the members of the I.F.A.A. until now, and it is unlikely that there will be much publicity on it in the future. According to Dux, even the people involved don't know each other well. "They know me only as the Flying Horse," he said. "They don't even know my name."

And as Dux tells the story of what happened five long years ago, preparations are under way for the next martial arts Olympiad—sites are being considered, fighters ranked and chose. They will meet, somewhere in the world, during the month of November—just as they did in 1975 and for decades before.

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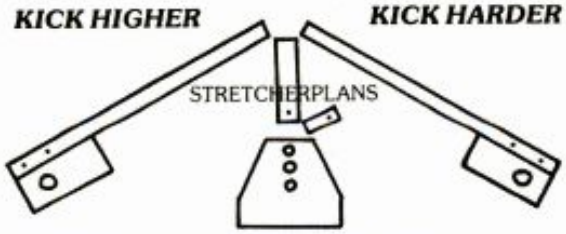

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JOHN PUNG / Los Angeles Times

Frank Dux's claims were the inspiration for the movie "Bloodsport," but it is difficult to prove the martial arts contest ever happened.

Ninja Hero or Master Fake?

Others Kick Holes in Fabled Past of Woodland Hills Martial Arts Teacher

By JOHN JOHNSON, *Times Staff Writer*

It's Friday night at the drive-in. As the pale-skinned hero of the season's hot new martial-arts flick snaps the bones of the Asian archvillain, the Winnetka 6 erupts in honking horns and flashing headlights.

The movie that has the big-wheeled pickups beeping is "Bloodsport." Advertised as the true story of an American who defeated all comers 13 years ago in a no-holds-barred international tournament of warriors, the movie opened last month at 800 U.S. theaters after successful exposure on the West Coast.

The film is the latest and most widely spread chapter in the improbable story of Frank Dux of Woodland Hills. It chronicles his training by a Japanese master warrior named Tiger and his eventual victory in the hush-hush competition in the Bahamas. And it lends credence to, although does not mention, other aspects of his romantic tales of warfare and adventure. His covert mission in Southeast Asia. His secret Medal of Honor. His battle against Philippine pirates to rescue a boatload of orphans.

Macho Fantasy

Dux, a powerfully built 6-footer who operates martial arts schools in Woodland Hills and North Hollywood, has told the story over the years to students and martial arts magazines. It's splendid stuff, obviously the stuff that movies are made of—and critics say it is about as real as the average macho fantasy.

Military records show that Dux never ventured closer to Southeast Asia than San Diego. His only known war injury occurred when he fell off a truck he was painting in the motor pool.

Dux's trophy from the Bahamas event was at least partially made in the San Fernando Valley, the trophy maker said. The ceremonial sword he won in the fights was sold, Dux said, in a failed attempt to buy freedom for the Philippine orphans.

Dux argues that his claims are difficult to prove or disprove because of the secrecy surrounding both his military record and the clandestine tournament. He said his life story can be verified by a few witnesses who say they saw the blood-gushing fight in the Bahamas and received top secret messages from him while he was in the military.

The real story of Frank Dux, say many who know him, is one of a bright but undistinguished young man who, using cleverness and chutzpah, re-created himself as a super-hero a decade ago, painstakingly authenticating his new persona with military medals, trophies and newspaper clippings of questionable origins.

Through the years, his story has flourished amid the hazy braggadocio of the American martial arts industry, a field peculiarly vulnerable to fakery, according to several experts.

"Anybody can buy a $4 black belt and set himself up," said Chad Minge, a martial arts instructor in the Valley.

As martial arts rose to new heights of interest in the United States in the 1970s, so did the competition to recruit students. Many instructors found that an exaggerated resume could increase revenue. The exaggerations led to hard feelings among other martial artists, and occasional threats.

"Paranoia abounds in the field," said David Weiss, editor of Ninja magazine in New York. "Most Ninja people I go out with won't sit with their back to the door." Most, however, "can't fight their way out of a paper bag."

Dux's magnetic character and legitimate martial arts skills drew students to his schools and propelled him into the spotlight. Armed and looking as dangerous as he always claimed to be, he appeared in national martial arts magazines, showed a network television audience how he taught martial arts to a cerebral palsy victim and impressed Sylvester Stallone with his kick-boxing.

Dux's version of his life story portrays him as a nerdy child in North Hollywood, the older of two sons of an immigrant European Jewish family. His father, Alfred, fought against the Nazis and would "play games with me to expand my awareness," Dux said. "Sometimes he would throw things at me unexpectedly to improve my reflexes," Dux was quoted as saying in a June, 1982, article in the Los Angeles Valley College magazine, Crown.

But young Frank was still a "joke" in the neighborhood when he said he was taken under the wing of a Japanese expatriate, who trained him in the ways of the ancient Ninja, the warrior class that arose in feudal Japan in the rural, mountainous Koga and Iga regions. Ninjitsu is the art of self-protection adopted by the Ninja, an art that so successfully taught hit-and-run attacks that the Ninja developed reputations as invisible warriors.

'Kinship Like No Other'

"We developed a kinship like no other," Dux said of his relationship with his "world-famous" teacher, Senzo (Tiger) Tanaka, who Dux said was the descendant of a warrior line 40 generations long.

"When the boy reached 16 years of age, Tanaka brought him to Japan, to the legendary Ninja land of Masuda," Dux said in a manuscript he and an associate wrote about the Ninja and Dux's role as the modern heir of a great line of black-robed fighters. "There, the boy's outstanding abilities shocked and pleased the Ninja community when he tested for the right to call himself Ninja."

Pressed in an interview for details, Dux said he did not know

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VALLEY NEWS

NINJA: Hero or Master Fake?

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where Tanaka's family is and said he is not even sure if Tanaka is dead or alive. The manuscript states that Dux's teacher was found dead on July 30, 1975, and was buried by a Ninja clan in California.

No trace of Tanaka could be found in historical texts or from independent martial arts experts. California state death records show no Tanaka dying on July 30 of any year in the '70s. Told of the findings, Dux said the man was living under an assumed name.

Shoto Tanemura, a Japanese who is one of a select group of recognized Ninja masters in the world, said in an interview in Los Angeles last week that he had never heard of Dux or Tanaka. "There is not Mr. Tanaka in Japanese history" of the Ninja families, Tanemura said.

Well-Known Master

Tanemura, who was interviewed over tea at a meeting with American martial arts instructors, said the nickname Tiger was used by a well-known master in Japan, who is dead. "Many crazy guys stand up as Ninja masters," Tanemura said.

That is not to say that the Tanaka name has no meaning. Millions of Americans were first introduced to Tiger Tanaka in the Ian Fleming novel "You Only Live Twice," in which Agent 007 befriends a Japanese agent by that name.

"Ian Fleming used to base his characters on real people," Dux explained.

Dux said it was Tanaka's dying wish that his student go to the Kumite—an invitational tournament without rules—being held in Nassau, Bahamas, to choose the world's champion hand-to-hand warrior.

Dux claims he became the first Westerner to win the championship, decided every five years, setting world records, including most consecutive knockouts (56) and fastest punch with knockout (0.12 of a second).

'Nobody Understood It'

"I discovered my own way, my own method, my own style," Dux said. "Nobody had ever seen it before. Nobody understood it."

Few martial arts experts seem to believe the story. "I don't think anyone in the world can do that," Curtis Wong, editor of Inside Kung Fu magazine, said of the knockout streak.

Jim Coleman, the editor at Black Belt Magazine in Burbank, said the movie is built "on false premises and poorly acted. From what we can ascertain, there never has been a competition like this."

"It's a nice story," said Chuck Cory, a Kung Fu instructor in Burbank, but he said he does not believe it.

"We have no recollection of such a tournament," said Kenneth Wilson, a spokesman for the Ministry of Sports in the Bahamas. Told that the tournament was a secret, he said: "We would know. No, never. It can't happen."

Dux said his critics are part of a conspiracy to discredit him involving a Moriarty-like archenemy half a continent away.

"They're all in this melodrama," he said of a roster of critics.

The enemy Dux refers to is Stephen Hayes, regarded by many as the best-known Ninja trainer in the country. Dux said Hayes perceives him as a threat and, as a result, he or his agents have tried to undermine him in California martial arts circles.

Hayes, the author of several books who lives in Ohio, denies that. Hayes also said he has taken steps to protect himself against threats from both coasts.

"There's quite an extensive security system that operates around me," Hayes said.

A brochure for Dux's ninjitsu schools lists him as "one of the most decorated veterans of the Southeast Asian conflict."

Visitors to his home were shown newspaper articles about him, including an editorial titled "A Silent Hero" that Dux said he clipped from the Washington Star. Told later that the newspaper's archives have no clippings about him, Dux said he could not remember the source of the editorial.

The piece quotes from a commanding officer's diary:

"We're hungry. We're tired. We're all out of ammo. We all might go mad if not for a spunky kid named Duke for short." The diary describes Dux crawling through a mine field to rescue an Asian baby that he later turned over to a Taoist priest.

"When we almost gave up, the Duke, by himself, charged the gun. The next thing you know, the Duke was behind the gun, cutting the enemy to pieces. He must have killed a hundred . . . at least. He turned defeat into victory."

'Flighty Ideas'

The story evaporates upon inspection, according to military records. The Marine Corps said that Dux served from 1975 to 1981 and that there is no indication he ever left the United States.

His military medical file, according to those who saw it, said that on Jan. 22, 1978, he was referred for psychiatric evaluation for expressing "flighty and disconnected ideas." Though a member of the reserves, which meant he was on active duty only a short time, he reportedly insisted that he was working for an intelligence agency.

A follow-up medical evaluation at a military psychiatric clinic in Long Beach on April 18 of that year found him normal, but seemed to scotch any further talk about his intelligence work, saying that his only possible intelligence work was being "cursorily" involved in gathering information about one individual.

Dux said the military ordered his record sabotaged to discredit him. The government did not know how much he knew about other covert operations, he said, so they placed information in his file to destroy his credibility.

Dux received his military decorations, he said, after pressing the military to authenticate his heroics. One day, he said, he received a phone call and went to an address in West Los Angeles, where he was handed a paper bag filled with medals.

Ribbons Out of Sequence

Marine Lt. Col. John Shotwell in Washington said Dux's military file shows there is "no indication in there anywhere" that Dux received any military awards.

After seeing a picture of Dux in uniform with his medals, Marine Lt. Col. David Tomsky in Los Angeles said several ribbons were worn out of sequence. Based on that and other discrepancies, Tomsky said he seriously doubted the medals and ribbons were Dux's.

A former teacher of Dux's at Grant High School in Van Nuys, Joe Feinstein, said Dux returned to his class in recent years and displayed "boxes and boxes" of medals and certificates, including, he believes, a Medal of Honor.

Dux has an explanation for that. "I . . . spoke to that teacher and to that class and made it clear that it doesn't become official until the orders are declassified."

Told about Dux's claim, Tomsky said: "I do not believe there has ever been an instance" of the Medal of Honor being bestowed secretly. He also said the medal Dux wore in the photo was an Army medal, not a Marine medal.

Dux acknowledged that his military record is confusing and blames the government. He said he has not been able to get the military to explain why he was given medals

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VALLEY NEWS

NINJA: Martial Arts Teacher a Hero or a Fake?

Continued from Page 10

from different branches of the service.

Intense, mercurial, with a personality that can range in a few seconds from humble to bullying, Dux is described again and again as charismatic.

"He must have a good rap because he's gotten away with it," said Benny (The Jet) Urquidez, a world champion kick-boxer who said he once told Dux to knock off the stories about beating him in a fight.

In an interview, Dux can be as quick as a record-breaking punch. At one point, he refused to give his age—he is 32—and claimed that he is known as the "warrior monk" because of his disavowal of marriage. He later acknowledged having been married.

One moment he talks eloquently of his desire to serve the community through his free rape counseling seminars. The next he lurches into freewheeling imagery. For instance, there is his explanation in a Times interview of why he no longer has the ceremonial sword he said he won in the Bahamas.

'Went for Good Cause'

"I sold my sword. I have no regrets for it. It went for a good cause. It went to buy kids out of slavery" who were on pirate ships. "What they do is, these local chiefs, if you would, on Mindanao, and stuff, take these kids who are orphans, and they put them on these ships and go out to the South China Sea."

The ships were crowded and uncomfortable. "I'm talking what we call a normal bunk. They have four or five kids squeezed into that thing. They live out in the open elements. They die. And the Philippine government just turns a blind eye."

So, Dux said he and some friends decided to help out. He said he gave the pirates money from the sale of the sword, but the pirates reneged at the last moment.

"We took arms up and fought boat pirates and we got these kids free."

Many of them are now in the United States. "I'm in touch with some of them, and they love me to death. And, I'll tell you, I've got one kid who's about 15 years old. All I have to do is look cross-eyed at one guy, and he'll kill for me."

Claims Investigated

Dux said the Cannon Film Group, which made the movie, investigated his claims about the tournament exhaustively before paying for the rights to his story. Producer Mark DiSalle, who took the story to Cannon, said that his research "definitely convinced" him that Dux's story is factual and that he is considering a sequel about Dux's military career.

Screenwriter Sheldon Lettich said: "Even we weren't able to verify the facts. We were taking Frank on his word." Lettich saw a huge trophy Dux once displayed at his school, which the article in the Los Angeles Valley College magazine said he brought back from the Bahamas.

When officials of a trophy shop in North Hollywood, the W.R. Moody Co., were shown photos of the trophy, they said the base and ceramic plaques were made by their company.

Dux said it was given to him by a former tournament official in 1980.

An organization sponsoring the tournament, Dux said, was the International Fighting Arts Assn., which Dux said is a warrior society. That organization is hard to locate. The IFAA trail seems to lead only to Dux's door. The invoice for another IFAA trophy lists him as the only contact for the organization.

Dux said the IFAA probably ordered the trophy and he picked it up. He doesn't know what happened to the organization, he said. He broke relations several years ago because the organization wanted him to throw a fight, he said.

Many people have questioned Dux's claims in the past, but were silenced by his persuasive manner and the weight of the documentation he had amassed.

Among the earliest documentation was a 1980 Black Belt Magazine article called "Once in a Lifetime," in which the publication wrote that it researched Dux's claims about the Bahamas tournament and found them true.

Dux also produced a framed letter of praise from John Stewart, author of the Black Belt article.

Stewart, who now works at another magazine, said that after the article appeared, he received information that raised questions about Dux's military career.

No Retraction

"Sometimes we get caught," he said. "Sometimes we were naive enough to think this added up." Stewart said he wants to forget about Frank Dux.

Dux's attorney, Michael Lucero, said if Black Belt subsequently changed its mind about Dux, it owed its readers a retraction or correction. Since none has appeared, he said, the magazine must still stand by the story.

Coleman, the editor, said he was not there when the article was published, but suggested that proving Dux's claims to be false is just as hard as proving them true.

Another source that could authenticate his claims, Dux said, was Jeff Strompf, a diet technician at the Veterans Administration hospital in Sepulveda. Strompf verified that Dux had served overseas.

Strompf said he met Dux in Naples, Italy, in 1976, when Dux was delivering top secret messages for the Army.

Told that Dux was in the Marines, Strompf responded: "I guess it was the Marines" for whom he was working.

Strompf said he was certain that Dux was there because he beat up four Italians who were bothering Strompf and a friend on the street. "I just stayed aside. I was in awe," Strompf said.

Another person Dux referred The Times to was Richard Robinson, a Philadelphia stockbroker who Dux said he first met at the Bahamas competition.

Research by The Times established that Robinson was a schoolmate of Dux at Grant High School, though Dux said he did not know him.

In telephone interviews, Robinson said he met Dux in the Bahamas. He said that Dux fought in the heavyweight class and that he fought in the 135-pound division.

Robinson said he was invited to the competition because he was a good street-fighter and an undefeated wrestler for three years at Lower Marion High School in Philadelphia.

Told later that the school's athletic officials don't remember him and that he doesn't appear in team pictures, Robinson first said he was ill the day pictures were taken.

Told that he could not be found in the school yearbook during any of his high school years, he said: "All right. I don't know what to say. Why is this movie so important to you anyway? Frank was a buddy of mine when I was in L.A."

Of Dux's story about the epic fight in the Bahamas, Robinson said: "If he says it's true, it's fine with me."

FULL MENTAL JACKET

"If one requires a literary laxative..."

by Alexander McColl

Publicity photos courtesy Warren Cowan & Associates

Self-styled American *ninja*

Frank Dux is billed as the "first covert operative to write a book." Of course, that is nonsense; so is the classification of Dux's alleged autobiography as "non-fiction."

Now in its second printing, *The Secret Man: An American Warrior's Uncensored Story* (Regan Books, 1996, New York City) purports to cover Dux's 1981-7 adventures as a globe-trotting "off the books" agent working directly for the late Central Intelligence Agency Director William Casey.

Regan Books gushed that "the real-life subject of the Jean-Claude Van Damme [1987 martial-arts] film *Bloodsport*... had a hidden career known to few" yet commanded "legendary status on both sides of the Iron Curtain. ..."

A legend in Dux's own mind, perhaps.

Soldier Of Fortune has thoroughly examined the book written by this former low-ranking commo technician in a Marine Reserve artillery unit. Conclusion: *The Secret Man* is a hoax. Others agree.

"He has never been employed by, or affiliated with, the CIA," spokesman Mark Mansfield told *SOF* in a 24 May phone conversation. Dux's book, the CIA spokesman added, "is sheer fantasy, a work of fiction."

It *is* unusual for the CIA to publicly comment on such things, Mansfield said, "but this individual's claims are so preposterous that we thought it was necessary and appropriate." He noted it is "rather convenient" for Dux that Casey is dead and unable to refute the book.

Dux again exploited the dead in claiming he socialized in El Salvador with SEAL officer Al Schaufelberger, who was killed there in May 1983. (Think of all of the aging, suburban women whose claim to "fame" is a jealously held fantasy about having slept with JFK — you get the idea.)

Macho photo in book: "Down in the trenches in 1983. The .357 Magnum was the sidearm that distinguished special unit personnel." For that matter, the .357 often is the choice of *any* outdoorsman wanting a reliable, hard-hitting pistol. The military-style rifle (partially obscured by Dux's knee) is *not* an M16 or AR15: Close examination reveals it is an Italian-made, .22LR look-alike. (So why would "the CIA's finest covert operative" carry a Rambo-looking squirrel rifle?)

"If one requires a literary laxative, this book rates an 11 on a one-to-10 scale. Dux fails to name even one individual who can corroborate his fraud/fantasies. A 'brain tumor' is no justification for labeling *The Secret Man* as non-fiction."

***SOF* Editor/Publisher Robert K. Brown**

Alive And Kicking

One of the real-life characters mentioned in the book is *not* dead, and he resents Dux's references to him. Retired Army Major General John Singlaub, whose SpecOps career began in WWII with the OSS, even had his attorney complain to the publisher, HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Dux claimed he last saw Singlaub in 1993 at a SpecOps expo in San Diego. Not only does Singlaub not know Dux, he did not even attend that event. The bullshit gets deeper: *The Secret Man* says that Singlaub headed the Phoenix program, which conducted "black" missions in Vietnam.

True, Phoenix operatives ruthlessly attacked the Viet Cong infrastructure; problem is that then-Colonel Singlaub headed the Studies and Observations Group (SOG). He was *never* involved with Phoenix, an entirely separate project.

"You know, it's an insult to your intelligence, on the subject of special operations, to think that this guy [Dux] could say that he was involved in these things in the way that he said he was involved," Singlaub told *SOF* Publisher Robert K. Brown. "It's an outrage. And with respect

to what he said about Bill Casey ... that's an abomination."

Dux further claimed to have known an "Admiral Smith, a Gulf War commander" whom he last had seen in Saudi Arabia "when I delivered intelligence assets needed for General Norman Schwarzkopf's implementation of a plan to disguise U.S. helicopters as Iraqi copters to penetrate Iraqi airspace." More nonsense.

Retired Gen. Schwarzkopf told *SOF*: "During the operations in the Persian Gulf, we never had a 'plan to disguise U.S. helicopters as Iraqi [heli]copters to penetrate Iraqi airspace.' Further, I don't know the Admiral Smith who is referred to as a 'Gulf War commander.'"

Then there's retired Navy Commander Larry W. Simmons, who commanded SEAL Team 5.

"Talking shop with SEAL Team 5 Lt. Cmdr. Larry Simmons (Ret.)," the book claims. Not so, says the ex-SEAL. Simmons (left) strongly condemns Dux as "a con man."

Now a military-adventure novelist, Simmons was talked into writing a "generic" forward to *The Secret Man*, sight unseen, by his literary agent — who also represented Dux.

"As soon as I read the first few pages of [Dux's] book," Simmons told *SOF*, "I knew I had been deceived into lending credibility to a fraudulent endeavor. ... He is not an American warrior; he is a con man."

A photo in the book purports to show Simmons "talking shop" with Dux. "I assure the reader [that] Frank Dux never talked shop with SEAL Team 5," Simmons told *SOF*. The book also has several action photos of SpecOps troops. Fact is, they mostly were provided by a SEAL and have nothing whatsoever to do with Dux.

Speaking of photos, the rear jacket of the $24 hardback book shows Dux posing, in requisite black-leather jacket and gloves, amid a collection of binoculars and cheap, Russian-made, night-vision scopes. Indeed, he looks very much like *Hollywood*'s idea of an ex-CIA tough guy.

In His Own Defense

On 15 May *SOF* interviewed Dux by phone in hopes of resolving some of the differences between "image" and "reality." Most of his responses can be characterized as hazy and back-pedaling.

When pinned down on obvious errors, Dux leaned heavily on *it's a secret*. He even noted at one point that some of the details may have eluded him due to a brain tumor.

Surprisingly, after writing a 316-page book that purports to expose a lot of the CIA's dark and dirty secrets, on several points Dux was unwilling to elaborate on *grounds of security*, or claiming that to answer the question would expose himself or his family to retribution. This lame evasion avoided such things as the actual time and place of his purported, initial interview with Casey.

Not surprisingly, *SOF* isn't the first publication to challenge Dux's self-aggrandizement.

On 1 May 1988 the *Los Angeles Times* carried a lengthy piece, "Ninja: Hero or Master Fake?" It said Dux had a long history of telling those who would listen "romantic tales of warfare and adventure," including the story of his heroic participation in a covert military mission in Southeast Asia.

The *Times*' article suggested that Dux was a "bright but undistinguished young man who, using cleverness and chutzpah, re-created himself as a super-hero a decade ago, painstakingly authenticating his new persona with military medals, trophies and newspaper clippings of questionable origins."

In the early '80s, Dux operated Los Angeles-area schools that taught a style of *ninja* combatives he had developed: Dux *Ryu*. Dux unquestionably is an accomplished martial artist, but even in that esoteric realm he apparently could not leave reality well enough alone.

The movie *Bloodsport*, starring Belgian actor Jean-Claude Van Damme, purportedly recreated Dux's brutal competition — during an unauthorized leave from his *secret* duties — in a *secret*, by-invitation-only duke-out called the *Kumite* (a Japanese martial word meaning "fight").

In his book, Dux bitterly denounced the *Los Angeles Times* and another California publication, *Black Belt* magazine, as participants in a smear campaign begun in 1988 by none other than White House aide Oliver North.

Black Belt's current executive editor, Jim Coleman, told *SOF*: "We do not believe Dux competed in it [Kumite]; we don't believe the event ever happened. ... He basically was a small-time martial-arts instructor here in California until that film. ..."

Give Dux credit, though; he's made big money bamboozling some of the *cultural elite* in New York and Hollywood. Nowadays he is billed as story co-creator in Van Damme's big-budget movie, *The Quest*.

Real World Vs. *Reel* World

The convoluted premise of Dux's book is this: As a young man, Dux was personally recruited by Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) Casey, who somehow knew Dux's father, to deal with CIA employees who had gone sour, and Casey himself acted as Dux's handler — all carried out in such a way to ensure that no one else in the Agency knew anything about it. If that doesn't cause one's nonsense detector to register in the red, here are some of the other flaws in the book:

What would any "true life" spy book be without a picture featuring trenchcoat and nifty-looking surveillance gear? (The same binoculars and night-vision devices probably can be purchased from some of *SOF*'s advertisers...)

• Besides the fact that Dux displays little personal knowledge of Casey in his otherwise detailed descriptions of their meetings, in the real world (versus the *reel*

A 1993 martial-arts demonstration in which Dux uses one kick to smash two bottles of champagne held by his students.

world of the movies) the Agency has other, more bureaucratic and less dramatic ways of dealing with unsatisfactory employees.

• The DCI has vast, complex duties; he simply *would not* have time to act as the personal handling agent for *any* operative.

• A *real* CIA agent risks capture and harsh interrogation. The Agency necessarily would keep something as sensitive and potentially damaging as Dux's supposed functions *far* away from the DCI. What's described in *The Secret Man* violates an elementary rule of spy tradecraft.

• The book describes numerous occasions where Dux received instructions, phony passports and other support "through channels." This is inconsistent with the (preposterous) idea that Casey alone handled Dux.

• Of the eight operations, more or less, described in the book, only one has anything to do with the problem of a CIA employee who had gone bad. This further erodes the supposed rationale for Dux being hired.

• The book is full of the politically correct, anti-CIA sentiment (a sure winner in New York and Hollywood), and badmouths the Nicaraguan anti-Sandinistas and U.S.-friendly regimes just about everywhere. Dux seemed to know nothing but a world of whores, gangsters, cops on the take and evil, corrupt CIA operatives. It is unlikely that someone with this mindset would have been welcome in the Agency.

• The book describes "Delphi 9": a joint CIA-KGB operation (Dux representing the CIA) supposedly to investigate aspects of the 1979 Sverdlovsk anthrax disaster. In the early '80s the United States and Soviet Union were still very serious adversaries; such a collaboration simply would not have happened.

• A common theme, right out of James Bond: The hero strolls into a notorious, underworld hangout in Milan, Duesseldorf, Hong Kong, or some other exotic place, almost immediately encounters a sinister but somehow noble and lovable Serbian, Chinese, etc., gangland kingpin who greets Dux as a long-lost brother then tells him whatever he needs to know and provides whatever assistance he needs. Strangely, no mention is ever made of which foreign language was used for these conversations.

• A whole chapter is devoted to a secret op to destroy fuel-storage tanks at Corinto, Nicaragua. The reasons for Dux and mysterious colleague "Bucky" to be there are flimsy: Bucky was there somehow to supervise the CIA's Argentine employees who did the demolition, and Dux was there to facilitate his exfiltration overland. Attempting to make an overland escape, as Dux supposedly did, instead of going out by boat with the rest of the team would have been suicidal: After a huge explosion, every enemy soldier and cop within 100 miles would be on alert. Equally ludicrous is Dux and Bucky philosophizing for 20 minutes or so while the oil tanks are blowing.

• A HALO team comprising one man each from the United States (Dux, of course), France, Great Britain, Israel, Italy and the Netherlands jumps into Iran — right in the middle of its war with Iraq — to destroy a heavily guarded chemical plant. Some inconvenient realities: At the strategic level, there is the problem of getting around the diverging agendas and institutional jealousies of *six* different governments and *six* different intelligence agencies. At the tactical level, there's the matter of different languages and operational procedures. (The passage at least is somewhat realistic in having the mission failing and all but one operative — guess who? — killed.)

"Secret" Man's Records

Frank William Dux was born on 6 April 1956, in Toronto, Canada. At an early age he moved with his family to California. On 14 April 1975 he enlisted into the Marine Corps.

Through the Freedom of Information Act, *SOF*'s sources obtained copies of Dux's military records. They show that he served in the Marine Corps Reserve through 13 April 1981; of this enlistment, the period of 16 June to 23 October 1975 was for active-duty training as a recruit at the San Diego Recruit Depot. His subsequent USMC (reserve) assignments were as a "wireman" and (in 1978) "intelligence specialist" with the Headquarters Battery, 1/14th Marines, 4th Marine Division. He ultimately reached the rank of lance corporal.

A notation in his health record says, "This individual interviewed because of some bizarre type of behavior which centered [at] flights of ideas and exaggerations. ..."

Enough said.

Frank Dux (center, in cap) choreographs fight scene in martial-arts movie *Lionheart* starring Jean-Claude Van Damme (second from left).

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Assistant Editor Marty Kufus and John Hogan, an SOF contributor, assisted with this report.